

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: HOW COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS CAN HELP METHODOLOGY

KSENIA NESTERENKO, Associate Professor, PhD (Linguistics)

Cognitive linguistics (Evans V., Lakoff G., Fillmore Ch.) as a branch of linguistics is connected with semantics, acquisition, storage, production and understanding of the language. Linguists working in this sphere try to explain how human knowledge is stored in memory and how it can easily be retrieved from it when needed. There are two classes of knowledge that can be explained – declarative knowledge that refers to knowledge of facts, knowledge of concepts, knowledge of the facts about individuals and surrounding world. Another one is procedural knowledge which is the knowledge of how to do with the things.

Among the subjects of cognitive linguistics which has actively been developing for the last thirty years are such linguistic branches as phonology, morphology (categories of clause, transitivity, voice, tense, aspect), word-building (inflectional morphology, as an example), lexicology (nominal classifications, idioms), syntax in relation with semantics and pragmatics.

Cognitive linguistics, studying the relations between language, mind, thought and organization and representation of knowledge, introduced the notions of concept, schema, frame, script, scenario.

For example, frame is defined as a collection of slots and slot filters that describe a stereotypical item. For example, let us consider the concept of a sparrow. It belongs to the class of birds, it has its specific attributes all of which can be encoded in a semantic networks. Then the situations in which a sparrow can appear would be described. Frames (Minsky) help in representing the cluster of complex knowledge.

Script contains information about stereotypical roles and events in everyday activities. It may be booking a train ticket or visiting a café. This allows inferences be made about reaching the booking-office or a café by transport, or presence of a waiter, paying money and so on. Methodologically such activities can be organized in classes as role-play, building a semantic network, etc.

What is important for methodology which flows out from cognitive linguistics is:

- the statement that knowledge of language arises from the language use. This statement is closely connected with modern methodological approach of teaching language, including a foreign language, through communication, so called language in use.

- the possibility to avoid influence of mother tongue (interference) while studying a foreign language. Usually mother tongue is acquired automatically and easily stocked in the child's mental structures. Cognitive linguists, investigating these mental structures, help methodologists in managing the process of semantic content verbalization by the means of a foreign language.

- the possibility of adequate comprehension of texts and discourses, interpretation of metaphors, distinguishing between literal and intended meanings.

There pragmatic inferences are needed to interpret the meaning and reference of an utterance as a part of discourse and also its implicatures.

- the possibility to make conscious operations while learning new knowledge or extending already existing knowledge automatic by repeated use of the material, use of production rules.

There are kinds of exercises which are compiled by methodologists for studying and teaching languages. A bulk of these exercises is made on the basis of cognitive linguistics elaborations. Thus, possible variants are building semantic networks, describing and performing the standard situations, pole-play, etc. Exercises connected with text comprehension can include revealing propositions, analysis of linguistic and non-linguistic meaning of some parts of the text, study of metaphors and other figurative language. Language structures can be learned through the contexts, thus there are correspondent exercises which serve better language understanding.

THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENT ON EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING

MARYNA BABENKO, associate professor, PhD (Linguistics)
Kharkiv H. Skovoroda National Pedagogical University

In modern world testing and assessing are more than accountability. They can also be a valid means of improving education. When assessment is correctly integrated with instruction, it informs teachers about many facts, among them are the following: which activities and assignments prove to be most useful; what level of teaching is most appropriate at this or that stage, with this or that audience; whether it is time to move on; when to ask more questions; whether students need to be given more examples, etc.

The importance of effective assessment in EFL teaching and learning has grown tremendously nowadays, when the emphasis of language teaching has shifted from the traditional way of transmitting knowledge to learners towards a different system of supplying students knowledge with which they will succeed in the real world. Very soon it was realized that traditional ways of evaluating learners' language abilities will not help to achieve this goal.

Traditionally many EFL instructors have evaluated their students' knowledge by giving examinations and papers in the middle and at the end of each term. As a result, instructors lecturing to a large class might not recognize for quite a lot of time that many students had trouble explaining or using a concept covered even at the very beginning of the class, or that some students consistently confuse some closely related ideas. Even if an EFL teacher sets weekly homework assignments, some students may be able to complete assignments without fully understanding the central concepts or developing skills which are part of the larger aim of the course. And even in a small class where students offer comments, discuss and ask questions, some crucial issues may have been misunderstood or overlooked by those who keep silent.